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# BAPTISM



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# BAPTISM

## Its Place in the Church Visible

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*"One Lord, one faith, one baptism"*

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BY

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## INTRODUCTION.

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IN the English-speaking world there has never been the breach between scholarship and the thinking of the people in general that elsewhere has proved so calamitous. Various things have contributed to this more favorable condition. English scholars do not so much make scholarship an end in itself. It is promoted to serve. It is not used to glorify a class.

The enlightenment and betterment of the people being kept in view, devious and unprofitable paths are avoided. The arbitrary, the conceited, and the false are escaped. Scholarship is itself improved by being made to suit itself to practical tests. The direct efforts of scholars themselves, or the existence of a large number of enlightened and active thinkers and workers between the exponents of scholarship and the people in general, has tended to popularize the facts and principles

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reached by the former, and to constitute a bond of union uniting all classes.

If the publication of the present series of small books on theology shall tend to prolong the day of mutual understanding and harmonious results, the undertaking will not prove to have been in vain.

The ordinance of baptism finds its theoretical ground in subjects that have been presented in other volumes of the present series, in the great facts and principles of Christianity. If these subjects have been comprehended fully, and with proper reference to practical elements, baptism will be recognized as a solemn obligation and as the source of great spiritual good. Otherwise, it will be a meaningless and burdensome form. Baptism, almost the least of all things, has a value in itself. If it does not take up a meaning passed down to it, and then become a practical factor in building up the kingdom of God, it has no credential to recommend it. The command back of it implies a service to be rendered. To disobey, dishonors God and defrauds man.

Baptism, while serving a purpose for the individual believer, is especially institutional in its



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character and operation. It helps to constitute, to distinguish, and to make effective the Christian church. It thus becomes the earthly badge and instrument of the divine kingdom.

In the treatment that follows, reference is constantly had to what is warranted by the best scholarship, to the practical ends that are to be served, especially through the church as an institution, and to what is uppermost and most pertinent in the conditions and exigencies of to-day.

It is well known that the subject of baptism has been the occasion of almost endless controversy, often bitter, often unfruitful, often involving injury and discredit. While the measure of attention that some subjects have received has been inversely as their importance, the contentions of men, as a rule, are closely connected with something vital. We should not, because of the bitter disputes that have attended it, cast aside the subject of baptism or treat it captiously, but seek to discover the significance that it possesses and ascertain its real authority, and what things enter into its proper observance. If we should be scandalized at controversy, then would we turn away from Christianity itself, for no other system or

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agency has been more persistently attacked or resolutely defended.

It is to be recognized that in reference to baptism the sincerest Christians and the ablest scholars have differed widely. It may seem unfortunate and unaccountable that in the course of the years some decisive data or convincing argument should not be found to remove these differences. Probably a part of our probation comes in at this point. We are to act on probable evidence, and each one is compelled to use some measure of judgment for himself. It may be, too, that the problems involved are promotive of a larger measure of attention to the theoretical and practical questions belonging to the Christian religion.

On subjects in regard to which men differ there should be an earnest effort to reach the truth, and then there should be no hesitation or concealment in declaring the conclusion reached. Neither good will nor advantage is promoted by a noncommittal course.

However, on the subject of baptism, especially in relation to the mode and the recipients of baptism, it is proper to state, in some cases at least, considerations of weight on each side, at the same

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time not avoiding the freest statement of conviction in the cases considered.

May this "little book," as it goes forth with its companions, find the present time opportune for the concentrating of attention on the great and really important things, and a close linking of fundamental truth and practical aims in the building up of the kingdom of God in the world.

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# BAPTISM.

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## CHAPTER I.

### THE NATURE AND OBLIGATION OF BAPTISM.

“Go YE therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them into the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit” (Matt. 28:19, American Revision). This language of Christ, in commissioning his apostles, is decisive as to the obligation of baptism. On the day of Pentecost, when the Christian church was established, Peter proclaimed, “Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins” (Acts 2:38). Other passages of Scripture show that the requirement of baptism was strictly carried out, and that baptism at once took its universal and permanent character.

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While the declared will of Christ was the direct ground for Christian baptism, that will was the expression of all of his attributes, including his wisdom and love. When once baptism is received as a divine requirement, we may expect to see rational grounds or confirmations for the same.

Baptism is a sacred rite. A rite is an external sign or action symbolizing some truth, expressing or promoting some feeling, or declaring some inward act. One or more of these elements, or even additional ones, may be included. Rites are common in every condition of man and in every department of life. This may be due to the fact that man is a dual being, possessed of body and spirit. It may be that the spirit requires the aid of the body and of outward things to imitate and give force and prominence to elements that would otherwise be indistinct or wholly impossible. That our spiritual acts or states may be made known to others, or be shared by them, such outward manifestation may be necessary, or at least helpful. God may be more truly and acceptably honored by a proportionate use of suitable rites. In view of the abundant use of rites and ceremonies on every hand, a sweeping criticism of them in



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religion must be set down to narrowness and prejudice. There is no presumption against them, and when once they are given by divine authority, they may readily be accepted as appropriate and beneficent.

Christ authoritatively gave to his church but two rites—baptism and the Lord's Supper. Christian truth and Christian experience might suggest and prompt additional rites, just as they are the basis of many other things that belong to a developed Christianity, a working church, and a transformed world. But for these two rites, Christ from the first made himself responsible. It is enough to us that he ordained them. After accepting this authority, we may look at reasons and results with gratitude for whatever recommendations and enforcements they may disclose. Loving obedience to the perfect will of the great Redeemer will make these outward observances, as well as all spiritual duty, joyous and full of blessing.

Baptism and the Lord's Supper are generally spoken of as sacraments. The term belongs especially to the Western church. The word, while not found in the Scriptures, gives a good idea of what

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is their primary character; namely, their character as covenant acts. The term is taken from the word *sacramentum*, which, in one of its uses, denoted the military oath required of Roman soldiers. The idea of the Christian life as a warfare may or may not have been taken into account when the word was appropriated; but the idea of an initiation and a solemn pledge to faithfulness was justly and strongly set forth by the term chosen. The Greek church, in using the term, "mysteries," was far less correct and fortunate.

But along with the covenant use of baptism, and giving it its significance and appropriateness in this regard, is the fitting symbolizing of spiritual truth. There is a manifoldness in all of God's works and appointments. The water of baptism naturally suggests the purifying and refreshing of the spiritual man. According to the frequent statement of the Scriptures, it is a testimony to the lost estate of man, and the renewal by the Holy Spirit of the spiritual nature of man. "Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God" (John 3:5). "Not by works of righteousness which we

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have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost" (Titus 3:1). "The like figure whereunto even baptism doth also now save us (not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God,) by the resurrection of Jesus Christ" (I. Pet. 3:21).

Baptism is also a symbol of justification or pardon. Peter exhorted the people to repent and be baptized "for the remission of sins" (Acts 2:38). Prevaillingly, the Lord's Supper looks to the death of Christ as the ground for justification, or what is done for us; while baptism looks to regeneration, or what by the divine Spirit is wrought within us. Baptism may also look back of both regeneration and justification to the death of Christ as opening up the way for all spiritual blessings. Thus it shares, in a measure, with the Lord's Supper the commemorating of the atoning death of Christ and the symbolizing of the blessings accruing therefrom.

Baptism, in its symbolizing, leaves no important Christian truth untouched. Its first and fundamental testimony is to the existence and nature of

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God, the doctrine of Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. Nothing in Christianity has been more universal than the use of, as Augustine calls them, "the evangelical words" given in the baptismal formula. Sometimes, indeed, a shorter formula, "baptism in the name of Jesus Christ," was used, the one truth lacking to complete the arch being thus confessed. The baptismal formula grew to be the "Apostles' Creed," as it is generally called, which as a simple, positive, and symmetrical setting forth of the great truths of Christianity has commanded the assent and admiration of Christendom down to our day.

The great spiritual truths of Christianity, especially the facts of a new life, and of a new humanity, and of a new world, are by baptism emphasized to the individual believer, to the community of Christians, and to those without. If baptism should be neglected or displaced, the solemn testimony and appeal of Christianity would lose much of their force. The truths and facts symbolized by baptism make it suitable as the initiatory rite of Christianity, as a covenant act by which believers declare their membership in the church of God, the visible community of the

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redeemed. Baptism as a sign declares a new subjective condition of the individual; as a covenant act it is the basis and the witness for the institutional character of Christianity, the visible, testifying, and battling church of Christ. Institutional religion is often disparaged, but the terribly real conditions to be met, the greatness of the work to be done, and the perils to be encountered make the outward church a necessity. It is not an end but a necessary means to the spiritual kingdom. If the founder of the kingdom saw that the church was necessary, and formally established it, we show great presumption when we disparage or ignore any of the features or factors that give it its character. The preaching of the gospel in its purity, and the right administration of the sacraments, are rightly regarded as the distinguishing marks of the church.

The family of Reformed churches concur in regarding baptism a seal as well as a sign. Christ gives, through his church, baptism, as a pledge of salvation to believers, and they, on their part, in taking upon themselves the sacred rite, give to him their pledge of faithful allegiance. Christ plights his faith to the believer, and the believer

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plights his faith to Christ, thus constituting a real covenant.

The sacraments are a means of grace, not because of anything in themselves, or in the administrator, but because of the faith and receptive condition of the recipient and the bestowment of divine grace and the accompanying agency of the Holy Spirit. Probably, in the reaction from sacramentarian views have come too shallow views generally to prevail.

Circumcision was the initiatory rite under the Old Covenant. Baptism takes its place under the New Covenant. The latter is so suitable in its symbolism and so unquestioned in its authority, that it at once took its designed and permanent place. "In whom also ye are circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, in putting off the body of the sins of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ: buried with him in baptism, wherein also ye are risen with him through the faith of the operation of God, who hath raised him from the dead" (Col. 2: 11, 12). While this passage expresses and emphasizes faith and related spiritual elements, and makes impossible an undue exaltation of circumcision under the Old

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Covenant, or baptism under the New, it does give to these rites a similar and corresponding place.

There is a broad sense in which the church of all the centuries and all the generations is one. Most of the objections to baptism would have been even more decisive against the rite of circumcision and the external and provisional character of Judaism. The objections made against baptism, especially against its taking the place of circumcision in constituting an outward fellowship, would be destructive of all institutional character for the church of God. Many virtually, if not openly, say that an institution is unnecessary, that a public, organized community for work and worship is superfluous, that all that is necessary is an inward, individual state and life, the objectors disclosing, on their part, a condition of soul too good for this life, and yet not suited to any other. Christ planted a church, a visible community. It is a means to the spiritual kingdom, and may cease when the end is reached. When that time comes, we shall doubtless receive due notice. A little attention will reveal the fact that the indisposition to recognize anything as the successor to the covenant act under the Mosaic dispensation



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betrays the absence of strong, constructive, and conserving elements. Baptism, like circumcision, meant not salvation, though favorable conditions thereto are implied, but in a true and special sense, introduction into a new community, having as its purpose the salvation of men and the worship of God.

If the church in all the ages, in a very real sense, is one, and if in the Jewish period circumcision was the initiatory rite or the sign of a covenant place in the congregation of God's people, how is it that in the Christian period baptism has come to take the place of the earlier rite? An answer to this question should solve many of the difficulties that rise in connection with the subject of baptism. In entering on our inquiry, we may take, for the present purpose, as our definition of baptism, the statement of the Westminster Shorter Catechism: "Baptism is a sacrament, wherein the washing with water, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, doth signify and seal our engrafting into Christ, and partaking of the benefits of the covenant of grace, and our engagement to be the Lord's." The simplest idea is a ceremonial washing with water,



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whether by immersion, pouring, or sprinkling. It had its type in the various lustrations, or ceremonial washings, of the Jews from the time of the giving of the law. Ceremonial purifications and circumcision stand side by side, the latter signifying largely, though not wholly, outward relations, and the former signifying inward character or promoting the development of spiritual ideas. Even in Jewish times these ceremonial washings had a growing importance and had assumed a special character, so that in the new era created by Christ, and heralded by John, his forerunner, the ceremonial washing with water itself underwent certain modifications, and it, besides fulfilling its own office, had transferred to it the office formerly performed by circumcision. The many washings ceased, and the one washing, signifying the new creature in Christ, was handed down as the one token and memorial. Circumcision ceased with the age of preponderating externalities, and baptism, emphasizing spiritual character and relationships, became the covenant sign. The suitability of baptism as the token of the church of the new dispensation is made evident by many considerations, some of which have been

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named. It was suitable that, in the age characterized specially by spiritual verities and recognition of individual character, the new sign should be taken and become exclusive, yet not so as to fail to preserve that which in the earlier rite had a continued meaning in the Christian dispensation. Outward and visible elements could not be wholly left behind, and baptism must suit itself to such demands as are permanent.

In vindication of this view as to the antecedent or internal history and development of baptism, the Scriptures may be appealed to. In the New Testament, the earlier purifications by water are called baptisms. "Which was a figure for the time then present, in which were offered both gifts and sacrifices, that could not make him that did the service perfect, as pertaining to the conscience; which stood only in meats and drinks, and divers washings [baptisms], and carnal ordinances, imposed on them until the time of reformation" (Heb. 9: 9, 10). In the directions for the consecration of Aaron and his sons to the priesthood, the Lord said, "And Aaron and his sons thou shalt bring into the door of the tabernacle of the congregation, and shalt wash them

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with water" (Ex. 29:4). A part of the direction for the setting apart of the Levites for their sacred work was the following: "Take the Levites from among the children of Israel, and cleanse them. And thus shalt thou do unto them, to cleanse them: Sprinkle water of purifying upon them, and let them shave all their flesh, and let them wash their clothes, and so make themselves clean" (Num. 8:6, 7).

All other purifications are best understood by taking notice of the law of purification for touching a dead body and for kindred defilements. "And for an unclean person they shall take of the ashes of the burnt heifer of purification for sin, and running water shall be put thereto in a vessel: and a clean person shall take hyssop, and dip it in the water, and sprinkle it upon the tent, and upon all the vessels, and upon the persons that were there, and upon him that touched a bone, or one slain, or one dead, or a grave: . . . But the man that shall be unclean, and shall not purify himself, that soul shall be cut off from among the congregation . . . the water of separation hath not been sprinkled upon him" (Num. 19:17-20). The frequent reference to purification

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by sprinkling water on persons, and things associated with them, has an important bearing on mode of baptism as later practiced. Attention will be called to this in another chapter. On great special occasions, as the giving of the law (Heb. 11:19), and on stated occasions, purification by water was used. The sprinkling of water as a rite of purification is often spoken of. "Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean: from all your filthiness, and from all your idols, will I cleanse you. A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you" (Ezek. 36:25, 26). David said, "Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean: wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow" (Ps. 51:7). "So shall he sprinkle many nations" (Ps. 52:15). "For if the blood of bulls and of goats, and the ashes of an heifer sprinkling the unclean, sanctifieth to the purifying of the flesh," etc. (Heb. 9:13). The last passage refers to the general law for ceremonial cleansing, which was at the basis for the many washings and sprinklings through the Old Testament period. The water was taken from a running stream, was therefore living water, and receiving the ashes of the burnt offering com-

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bined the ideas of sacrifice and cleansing. If there is a scarlet thread that runs all through the Old Testament, there is also a clear stream of living water flowing down through all its sacred pages. We should greatly err, if we should not see, beyond the ceremonial purification, spiritual renewal and an education in spiritual things. It would be too much to expect that weak and fallen human nature should not, in many cases, stop in empty forms, endlessly multiplied to make up, if so it might be, for their felt barrenness. The New Testament leaves no doubt as to this vain and repugnant formalism.

These ceremonial sprinklings and washings, both of the truer and of the perverted kind, came to take the name "baptism," a term specially developed and suited to this use. The Greek version of the Old Testament dating from the third century before Christ, in two passages from the apocryphal books, clearly exhibits this. Judith, a Jewess, was in the camp of the Assyrians. The account of her request of the Assyrian general and her action is given, as follows: "Let my lord now command that thy handmaid may go forth unto prayer. Then Holofernes commanded his

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guard that they should not stay her. Thus she abode in the camp three days and went out in the night into the valley of Bethulia and washed [baptized] herself at a fountain of water by the camp" (Judith 12: 6, 7). This was undoubtedly a ceremonial purification by sprinkling or pouring by her own hand or that of her servant. The important point is that it was called baptism. The second passage from the apocrypha is the following: "He who is washed [baptized] from a corpse, if he touch it again, what availeth his washing [baptism]?" (Ecclesiasticus 34: 25 ). This so plainly refers to the general law for purifications, which has already been referred to, that of the nature and the manner of the baptism we have no doubt.

Josephus, writing in the first Christian century, says, "For those defiled by a dead body, they cast a little of the ashes and a hyssop branch into a spring, and baptizing with the ashes put into the spring, they sprinkled both on the third and seventh of the days, and after that they were clean." Words preceding this language show even more fully the nature of the ceremonial cleansing to which the word "baptism" is applied. A passage

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in the writings of Philo, a senior contemporary of Christ, is so definite that it must not be omitted: "Nearly all other persons are besprinkled with pure water, generally in the sea, some in rivers, and others again in vessels of water which they draw from fountains. But Moses having previously prepared ashes which had been left from the sacred fire, (and in what manner shall be explained hereafter,) appointed that it should be right to take some of them, and to put them in a vessel, and then to pour water over them, and then, dipping some branches of hyssop in the mixture of ashes and water, to sprinkle it over those who were to be purified." The reference to the manner in which nearly all other persons were sprinkled, or baptized, reminds of the fact that the Gentile nations, as well as the Jews, had their purifications by water. On Gentile washings, and for additional examples of Jewish washings, see the "Mystery of Baptism," by Axtell.

One example out of several in the New Testament, in which the term, "baptism," is given to ceremonial washings may be given, "For the Pharisees, and all the Jews, except they wash their hands oft, eat not, holding the tradition of the



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elders. And when they come from the market, except they wash [baptize themselves] they eat not. And many other things there be, which they have received to hold, as the washing [baptisms] of cups, and pots, brasen vessels, and of tables" (Mark 7: 3, 4). The only new thing in this passage is the extent to which the baptisms are carried, the character and extent of the Pharisaic additions.

The baptism of proselytes to Judaism doubtless sprang out of the prescribed ceremonial cleansings. Authorities are pretty equally divided as to whether there was such a thing as proselyte baptism at the time of Christ. Some say that there was, and that it was by immersion; others add that the children in the families of proselytes were also baptized. In times somewhat later, all of this was true. The immersion was performed by the candidate's standing in water up to his neck and plunging his own head under the water. Circumcision was, of course, continued, but the baptism of proselytes was given very great importance. Probably at the time of Christ there was a baptism of proselytes by sprinkling or pouring, much after the manner of the prescribed ceremonial



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sanctifications, and it may, as some claim, date back to the Babylonian captivity.

What has been said in reference to the use of water in Jewish purifications, in the first place according to the law, and later with Pharisaic additions, prepares the way for understanding baptism as brought forward in the work of John the Baptist. A multitude of sprinklings and washings denominated baptisms, likely also a special but analogous rite connected with the reception of proselytes to Judaism, were forerunners for John, the forerunner of Christ; otherwise, the success of John would have no sufficient explanation. Antecedent elements would incline us to think of the baptism of John as by sprinkling or pouring. The hyssop or the bowl would meet the case equally well. John was himself a priest. His work was to preach repentance and to sanctify the people for the coming and work of Christ. The ceremonial act betokened the inward change.

Christ, in his receiving baptism at the hands of John, was ceremonially sanctified for his work. Likewise, he fulfilled and brought to a close the long series of typical washings, save as by his own appointment he gave to baptism a new significance

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and a permanent place in his church. He fulfilled all righteousness.

The study of the nature of baptism should bring us to a new sense of its claims upon us. The loss to the individual believer and to the kingdom of Christ from the neglect of baptism might easily be inferred. Obedience in this act is a step to further obedience. By it personal faith becomes more real and firm. By giving baptism its proper place, the fact of separation between the church and the world is made prominent, and the work of evangelization is promoted. When men cease to humor their own natural wayward tempers, obedience in the divine ordinance of baptism will assume new beauty and attractiveness. What more beautiful words could be said of any persons, especially of parents, than the words spoken of Zacharias and Elizabeth? "They were both righteous before God, walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless" (Luke 1:6). Love will not hesitate to walk in the way commanded by Christ and hallowed by his example.

Those not baptized in infancy should not unnecessarily delay baptism after their exercise of

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faith in Christ. The Scriptures always enforce or imply immediate action. In our day, various acts, as oral testimony or a written declaration, or some other simple outward act may, for the moment, meet requirements, be what immediate baptism was in the special conditions and circumstances of the early church; but these acts or expressions should not for an indefinite time take the place of baptism. The church of to-day must not cease to be Christian by ceasing to be apostolic. Undoubtedly the neglect of baptism in many cases, as well as the failure to secure the full benefit of it in other cases, is due in large part to the low conceptions, weak convictions, and want of faithfulness on the part of Christian ministers. The ordaining to the ministry, while not a sacrament, is a solemn rite, and has its significance largely as conveying authority to administer the sacraments. Yet, judging by remarks often heard, many candidates for ordination think very much more of the authority to solemnize marriages than they do of the authority to administer the sacraments. On the part of many ministers, little attention is given to the subject of baptism till it is crowded upon them, and then the attention

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given is not intelligent or sympathetic. Many abuses have come in, in connection with the ideas of the church, of orders, and of office, yet churchliness, orderliness, and obedience still rank as qualities that are worthy.

It may be proper and advantageous to notice some of the errors in regard to baptism that have marred and hindered the church in the course of its history. The Roman Catholic error is the grossest. It makes baptism one of the seven sacraments, all of which of themselves are said to work out a spiritual benefit, so to speak, to work magically. The sacraments are in the hands of the priests. This doctrine is what gives to the Roman Church its despotic power. Baptismal regeneration, along with various attendant errors, is included in the doctrine of the Roman Church.

Some other churches share in these views, or sympathize with them in greater or less part. That baptism is an "instrument of grace," as expressed by a leading authority, "is the view of the Roman and Eastern churches and of one (the High Church) party of the Protestant Episcopal and [most of] the Lutheran churches. Nearly the same view is held by the Disciples of Christ

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(Campbellites) who regard baptism as the remitting ordinance of the gospel." Those who hold the extreme doctrine of baptismal regeneration, or the doctrine, so to speak, of baptismal justification, support the same by many Scripture passages, in which regeneration or justification is connected with baptism, overlooking the many passages in which the spiritual act or attitude of the subject of salvation is expressly made the condition of spiritual benefits. The coupling of baptism with these benefits in many passages of scripture was because, historically, in the circumstances in which the gospel was first proclaimed, it usually stood in close connection with them. The error in thought or language, thus, of many of the church fathers is easily explained.

The Quakers do not regard water baptism as obligatory after Christianity had separated from the Jewish form. The words in which Christ instituted the ordinance and many statements in the various books of the New Testament plainly show that baptism was designed to be universal and permanent.

While the origin of the Anabaptists was due to a revolt against the doctrine of baptismal regenera-

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tion and the various superstitions and tyrannies of the times, it is in some cases a serious question whether "believers' baptism," as it is called, is not characterized, in some cases, with much of the superstition and intolerance of the system at first opposed. It is a nice point to appreciate baptism for what it is, and to avoid making it what the brazen serpent came to be to the blinded Jews.

After noticing grave errors, is it too light a thing to call attention to the pronunciation, *bab-tism*, used by many persons? Unintelligent and unappreciative elements may stand close together under this faulty pronunciation. Dr. L. Davis, who frequently heard Dr. Alexander Campbell preach, often referred to the winsomeness on his lips of the word *baptism*.

## CHAPTER II.

### MODE OF BAPTISM.

THE consideration of the mode of baptism has importance, because of the interest and merit of the subject itself, and also because of the distraction and discredit brought to the church by controversies on the subject.

Three general positions are taken: The first is that immersion is the only legitimate and valid mode. The second is that affusion, or the application of the water to the person by sprinkling or pouring, is the proper mode, many holding that it may, by ecclesiastical authority or by the administrators of it, be made the exclusive mode. Most persons who hold strictly to this position concede that by right, or in charity, immersion is to be regarded as valid baptism. The third position is that liberty as to the mode of baptism is to be recognized, the subject of baptism having the right to determine the mode for himself. It will be

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seen that the examination of the first position will bring almost every feature and point bearing on the mode under consideration.

The Greek verb *baptizo* (βαπτίζω), which is translated into the English word "baptize," or, more properly, is simply transferred into the English language, is used by immersionists as in itself a conclusive argument for their position. They say that the word means mode, and nothing but mode—to dip. Those wishing to study the use of the term at length are referred to the thorough treatment given by Dr. James W. Dale, in his work on "Classic Baptism." A brief statement must suffice here. The verb *baptizo* (βαπτίζω) is derived from the simpler verb *bapto* (βάπτω). It is used to express a higher, stronger, or more distinctive meaning. It is the only word with which ritual baptism is directly concerned. Yet certain purposes may be served by considering briefly the primitive verb.

The word *bapto*, starting with the meaning, to dip, came to mean, also, to dye, to stain, to temper, to tincture, etc. In some of its uses it denoted a result without reference to means or mode of action. The word *baptizo*, starting with the primary



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meaning of *bapto*, to dip, came to mean, to sink, to drown, to saturate, to incrust, to stupefy, to intoxicate, to destroy, to exert any controlling influence. To a greater extent than *bapto* it indicates a result without reference to means or mode of action. Dr. William Hamilton says, "In secondary use, *baptizo* expresses condition, the result of complete influence effected by any possible means and in any conceivable way." We have not only in classical Greek a progressive meaning and use from *bapto*, "to baptize," but in passing from classical Greek to the Greek used by the Jews and in the New Testament, there is a further progress. New ideas and higher realities compelled old words to take a new meaning. The expansive and transforming power of a new vital force has its examples in every department of literature. The word *baptizo* was the best-suited word for ceremonial cleansing that classic Greek furnished, and the Jews and then the Christians took it and used it for their purpose and in the sense that their use required. No violence was used, or unusual liberty taken, as the various classic meanings of *baptizo* will show, in using the term for any form of ceremonial purification in which water was

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used. Even the classic writers use the term with such latitude as to include baptizing with tears, or with dew.

In showing that the word *baptizo*, as used by Jews and Christians, did not of itself denote immersion, many examples and proofs may be brought forward. The first evidence is in that among the Jews first and the Christians later, baptism was a ceremonial purification which was performed by sprinkling. The nature of this purification has already been noticed. The fact that these purifications by sprinkling are called baptisms has also been shown by New Testament usage (Mark 7:3, 4; Heb. 9:10) and a passage from Josephus, as well as by two references from the apocrypha as given in the Septuagint. The description of these purifications in Hebrews, and in the writings of Philo, show that sprinkling was the mode used in purifications. It is not the word *baptizo*, but the fact that baptism is the outgrowth and successor of the Jewish purifications, that has the most direct bearing on mode. The word itself is not decisive as to mode. The English Bible, therefore, wisely transfers the term in its general sense. Its use has been compared to the use of

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the word "kill," which expresses a condition or result, but does not indicate means or mode. To kill one's self is suicide; to kill with malice is murder; to kill under authority of law is to execute. To translate *baptizo*, in classic usage, by immersion in some cases is legitimate, in other cases violent, and in others ridiculous. Even if a single primary meaning could be found, "to dip," for example, only extreme hardihood would refuse to consider the possibility of a secondary meaning differing more or less, especially under the distinctive requirements of Judaism and Christianity.

The baptism of the people unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea was an initiation, a committing unto Moses. (I. Cor. 10:1, 2.) The cloud was above, but only by imagination was the sea beneath. The example would best be represented by pouring, the candidate standing in the margin of the stream or pool as the rite of baptism is performed.

The connections, in the Scriptures, in which the term, "baptize," is used are next relied on by immersionists to prove their position. In examining the passages of scripture brought forward by them, the aim should be to ascertain whether the inter-

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pretation given by them is the natural and necessary one. It is recorded that John baptized "*in* the river Jordan" (Mark 1:5). But in the verse preceding, it is said he baptized "*in* the wilderness," the same preposition being used in Greek and in English. The word translated "*in*" is many times translated "*at*," sometimes "*by*" (I. Cor. 12:13), or "*with*," as with water, with fire, with the Holy Ghost. "John indeed baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized *with* the Holy Ghost" (Acts 11:16). "John answered, saying unto them all, I indeed baptize you with water; . . . he [Christ] shall baptize you *with* the Holy Ghost and *with* fire" (Luke 3:16). "I indeed baptize you with water . . . he [Christ] shall baptize you *with* the Holy Spirit, and *with* fire" (Matt. 3:11). In the passages just given, "*with* water," where the preposition is not italicized, is rendered from the Greek instrumental dative without a preposition, the meaning being the same as in the form where the preposition is used.

It might be thought that John's baptizing at the Jordan is an argument for immersion. This might be accounted for by John's being a man

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of the wilderness and naturally resorting to outside sources for water, or the partiality indicated in the Scriptures for living water for ceremonial cleansing. The same explanation could be given for his going to Enon, where there was "much water" (many springs).

If the "*in Jordan*" should still be pressed, it might be harmonized with the idea of the candidate's standing in the margin of the stream, John perhaps with them, to be away from the crowd on the shore. The early pictures in the catacombs, some of them dating from the close of the second century, all represent the candidate as standing in the shallow water and the baptizer standing on the shore. In two instances, the baptizer has his hand on the head of a boy; in one of the instances a spray of water encompassing the boy's head. In the church of St. John at Ravenna, dating from about 450 A. D., Christ is represented as standing in the Jordan, the water reaching to the waist, and the Baptist standing near, as if on the bank, pouring water from a shell or some small vessel upon Christ's head. It is recorded that Christ "went up straightway out of the water" (Matt. 3:16). The Revised Version says, however, "went

up straightway *from* the water.” In some cases, at least, this is the only meaning that the original preposition will bear.

The baptism of the eunuch by Philip is brought forward as an evidence for immersion. The language, they “went down both *into* the water” and “came *up out of* the water” (Acts 8: 38, 39) might be translated, “went down to the water” and “came from the water.” The first of the original prepositions is rendered in the English Version by “to” about four hundred times, and the second is rendered by “from” about two hundred times. But the words, even as in the English Version, do not necessarily imply immersion. If John’s baptism might have been by sprinkling or pouring, the mode might have been the same in this case. In our day there are examples of baptizing by pouring, the baptizer and the candidate standing ankle-deep, knee-deep, or waist-deep in the water. If the language, going down into the water and coming up out of the water, means immersion, both Philip and the eunuch must have been immersed.

Perhaps the passages most completely relied on by immersionists to prove their position are the

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two passages containing the words "buried with him by baptism" (Rom. 6:4) and "buried with him in baptism" (Col. 2:12). The second passage might as well be rendered in the identical terms of the first. Many seem to think that the burying has reference to being placed beneath the water, whereas it has reference to being placed in Christ's tomb. The baptism, whatever form may be used, is a baptizing not only ritually, but really *into Christ*, so that in a figure the believer goes with him unto death, and into the grave, and comes forth with him in a resurrection into newness of life, and will finally stand with him in glory. In his death we have hope of life. As in his grave sin and the evil self shall ever remain, in his resurrection the new man shall appear. All depends on our being united with him not simply by baptism ritually, but "through the faith" really.

It is claimed that the fact that baptism is a sign of regeneration establishes the propriety or necessity of immersion as the mode. The symbolizing of regeneration as a purification may just as truly be by water applied to the person as by immersion. But baptism does not symbolize



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simply the fact of a making new, but also the work of the Spirit as the agent in regeneration. This work is appropriately set forth by sprinkling or pouring. "And it shall come to pass afterward, that I will pour out my spirit upon all flesh" (Joel 2:28). "And on my servants and on my handmaidens I will pour out in those days of my Spirit" (Acts 2:18). "Because that on the Gentiles also was poured out the gift of the Holy Ghost" (Acts 10:45).

That immersion was not the exclusive mode of baptism, if, indeed, it was practiced at all, may be inferred or argued from a number of references in the Scriptures. "Then went out to him [John] Jerusalem, and all Judæa, and all the region round about Jordan, and were baptized of him in Jordan, confessing their sins" (Matt. 3:5, 6). While various explanations and suppositions are put forward to show that this baptism might have been by immersion, the very numbers who came make the idea improbable. The physical feat would have overshadowed the spiritual significance. The idea of the people going out into the stream and dipping their own heads under the water, as was the case in later proselyte baptism,



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and in some well-known cases of Christian baptism, is most unlikely. The language, "in Jordan," as before indicated, might mean at Jordan, or that the subjects of baptism stood in the water and were baptized by pouring or by sprinkling, either singly or in companies. "Then they that gladly received the word were baptized: and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls" (Acts 2:41). Here the difficulty from numbers is again present, with the added circumstance that at Jerusalem there was no large body of water. Jerusalem was well supplied with pools and cisterns, but it is difficult to believe that conditions would have favored their use for immersion on such a scale.

"Can any man forbid water, that these should not be baptized which have received the Holy Ghost as well as we?" (Acts 10:47.) The Revised Version says, "forbid the water." The natural meaning seems to be, "forbid the water," as something that was to be brought, referring also to what was an understood custom. The language is that of Peter, the chief of the apostles, spoken when the family of Cornelius, the first Gentile converts, were received into the Christian church,

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and has therefore special significance. Besides, it is wholly improbable that in the house of Cornelius there would have been suitable provisions for immersion. It is to be noticed, too, that in this case the act of baptism was suggested by the gift of the Holy Ghost, and was significant of this, pouring or sprinkling thus being more appropriate than immersion.

The account of the conversion and baptism of the Philippian jailer "and all his" does not favor the idea of immersion. The baptism was in the house and occurred before day and without time for preparation. The baptism of Paul, as alleged by some, was performed while he was standing. (Acts 9:18.) The references in the Gospels and Acts to baptizing with water, with fire, with the Holy Ghost, are not consistent with immersion; neither are the baptisms referred to in the seventh chapter of Mark, fourth verse. The important thing is, not that we be baptized *into* water, but into the name of the Lord Jesus.

We may now turn to the question of mode, as presented in the light of church history. For a long period extending to the recent past, writers of church history gave testimony that was wel-

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comed and eagerly employed by the advocates of immersion. This was because as far back as church history had been able to go, immersion, in the threefold form, however, was found to be the mode in use. From this it was argued that immersion was the original mode; that, in consequence, it must be the only legitimate mode for all time.

When, in 1873, the "Teaching of the Twelve Apostles" was discovered, and, in 1883, published to the world, the darkness which church historians had before been unable to penetrate was in a measure removed. This ancient manuscript dates from near the beginning of the second century, and discloses the fact that, while at that time immersion in the threefold form was the prevalent and preferred form, other forms were recognized as equally valid. Clinic baptism, in which dampened sheets were placed about the sick, had been viewed as an argument for immersion. In the early church it was regarded as of doubtful validity; but the "Teaching" shows that there was no question at the early time in which it was written as to the validity of affusion, and that it had a standing for itself, and not simply as immersion.

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The language of the "Teaching" is: "As regards baptism, baptize in this manner: Having given all of the preceding instruction, baptize into the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit in living [running] water. But if thou hast not living water, baptize into other water, and if thou canst not in cold, [then] in warm [water]. But if thou hast neither, [neither running nor standing, neither cold nor warm, in sufficient quantity for immersion,] pour water on the head three times into the name of Father and Son and Holy Spirit." The language that follows shows that already at this time "additions were being made to the simple rite as first given: "But before baptism let the baptizer and the candidate for baptism fast, and any others who can, and thou shalt command him who is to be baptized to fast one or two days before."

The next oldest description handed down to us of baptism is by Justin Martyr, who wrote about 140 A. D. It is as follows: "As many as are persuaded and believe that the things taught and spoken by us are true, and promise to live accordingly, are instructed to pray and to entreat God with fasting for the remission of their past sins,

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while we at the same time pray and fast with them. Then they are brought by us to a place where there is water and are regenerated in the same manner in which we ourselves were regenerated. For in the name of the Father and Lord of the whole universe, and of our Saviour, Jesus Christ, and of the Holy Spirit, they then receive the washing with water. For Christ also said, 'Except ye be born again, ye shall not enter the kingdom of heaven.'” There is little doubt that the mode of baptism referred to by Justin Martyr was immersion.

Single immersion was introduced in the fourth century, but was condemned by the church. The Apostolic Constitutions say, “If any bishop or presbyter does not perform the three immersions, but only one immersion, let him be deposed.” Single immersion, while not favored, obtained recognition by the close of the sixth century. The historians who have held to the idea of immersion as the earliest mode of baptism have always been puzzled by the representations of pouring in the earliest pictures of baptisms and by the small size, too small for immersions, of the baptismal fonts in some of the earliest church edifices.

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From the ninth to the thirteenth century, sprinkling grew from occasional use to be the general practice. In England, however, the change did not take place till several centuries later. Convenience, especially in connection with the baptism of children, the conversion of the northern nations, the growing rarity of adult baptisms, and a sentiment of liberality kindred to that of the early church, seem to have been the governing considerations in bringing about the change of mode.

In case affusion, growing out of the system of Jewish ceremonial purifications, was the mode of baptism used by John and continued by Christ and the apostles, what explanation can be given for so complete and general a change as, in that event, took place within the first two centuries? Two lines of causation or influence are named, the one a tendency within the church toward a broader ceremonialism, the other the powerful influence of Gentile ideas and customs. The tendency to attribute a supernatural influence to the water of baptism appears in the writings of the earliest of the apostolic fathers. Soon the cross was regarded as joined to the water. Justin speaks of water

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baptism as regeneration. Tertullian speaks of all waters, after invocation of God, attaining "the sacramental power of sanctification." Superstitious rites were used in consecrating the mystical water. The Apostolic Constitutions say of the candidates, "Thou shalt anoint them [before and after] and thou shalt dip them in the water." "This baptism, therefore, is given into the death of Jesus; the water is instead of the burial, and the oil is instead of the Holy Ghost, the seal is instead of the cross."

The tendency to multiply and exaggerate outward forms led, according to this view, not only to immersion and then triune immersion, but to a multitude of attendant elements, such as the anointing of the water, the ceremony of renouncing Satan, exorcism, an unction before and after baptism, the unclothing of the candidates, the kiss, the use of lights, the wearing of white garments, the twisted thread, tasting of milk and honey and also salt, washing of feet, etc. From such a tropical ceremonial we are forced to go back to a simpler beginning, in which the central thing, the use of water, must have been much less elaborate and spectacular.



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But we are not left in ignorance of the great influence exerted from Gentile sources, and the tendency of the church to give it place. We must remember that the church itself was made up mostly of a recent and constant influx of converts from heathenism. They naturally brought some of their ideas and customs with them. The name of Gregory the Great stands connected with the policy of accepting native customs and giving them a Christian significance. Baronius wrote: "It was permitted the church to transfer to pious uses those ceremonies which the pagans had wickedly applied to a superstitious worship, after having purified them by consecration." But did the Gentiles have those elements that could have been incorporated into the overgrown ritual of baptism?

As is well known, the Eleusinian mysteries celebrated at Athens and Eleusis were the most ancient, sacred, and awe-inspiring of all Greek rites. Later, they were celebrated in various cities. The celebration extended through nine days. On the second day those to be initiated went in solemn procession to the seacoast, where they underwent purification. Two rivulets are referred to as a



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place to which candidates for initiation went in order to be purified. Gentile purifications included both dipping and affusion. Dr. Axtell, in his work on "The Mystery of Baptism," brings together various testimonies as to the nature and prevalence of Gentile purifications, and also testimony as to the influence of these within the church. He says, "The desire to be completely cleansed and the desire to excel the heathen ceremonies, brought in dipping, and then trine immersions and many other Gentile rites."

Justin Martyr seeks to maintain the preëminence of Christian baptism by indicating that Gentile baptisms were stolen from the prophets or counterfeited by devils. Tertullian frankly confesses to an enlargement of the ritual of baptism. After claiming tradition as an authority for various practices, he says: "To deal with this matter briefly, I shall begin with baptism. When we are going to enter the water, but a little before, in the presence of the congregation and under the hand of the president, we solemnly profess that we disown the devil, and his pomp, and his angels. Hereupon we are thrice immersed, making a somewhat ampler pledge than the Lord has appointed

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in the Gospel. Then when we are taken up we taste first of all a mixture of milk and honey." He then speaks of "offerings for the dead as birthday honors," of pain when any wine or bread from the sacrament of the eucharist is cast to the ground, and the using of the sign of the cross on every occasion. He then says, "If for these and other such rules you insist upon having positive Scripture injunction, you will find none. Tradition will be held forth to you as the originator of them, custom as their strengthener, and faith as their observer."

In one of his dialogues, Jerome makes a noted bishop, after referring to certain customs, to say: "Many other observances of the churches, which are due to tradition, have acquired the authority of the written law, as for instance, the practice of dipping the head three times in the laver, and then, after leaving the water, of tasting mingled milk and honey in representation of infancy, and again the practices of standing up in worship on the Lord's day, and ceasing from fasting every Pentecost; and there are many other unwritten practices which have won their place through reason and custom."

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Basil says: "Moreover we bless the water of baptism and the oil of the chrism, and besides this the catechumen who is being baptized. On what written authority do we do this? Is not our authority silent and mystical tradition? Nay, by what written word is the anointing of oil itself taught? And whence comes the custom of baptizing thrice? And as to the other customs of baptism, from what Scripture do we derive the renunciation of Satan and his angels? Does not this come from that unpublished and secret teaching which our fathers guarded in a silence out of the reach of curious meddling and inquisitive investigation?" But notwithstanding the tendency toward ceremonialism in the church and the influences from Gentile sources, there remained what seem to be evidences of affusion, as the earlier form of baptism. Cyprian, speaking of clinic baptism, said, "Whence it appears that the sprinkling also of water prevails equally with the washing of salvation." Some of the early versions of the Scriptures, the custom of some of the schismatic churches of the East, early Christian art and expressions and examples here and there, give countenance to the antiquity of affusion.

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Athanasius, when a youth, in play baptized a number of his fellows. According to Rufinus, "when the bishop found that all things had been duly performed according to the observances of religion," and "as water had been poured upon these persons," their baptism was held as valid and ought not to be repealed.

But church history has shed new light on the mode of baptism in the more modern period. It was claimed, though the contrary was asserted by responsible historians, that the Anabaptist sects, those rebaptizing on the profession of faith, appearing in different countries in the time immediately following the Reformation, baptized invariably by immersion. It was claimed that the Mennonites, an Anabaptist sect who now baptize by affusion, had at some time changed their mode of baptism; but this position has been sufficiently disproved. It has been proved that the Anabaptists were not at first concerned with the mode of baptism. Perhaps the Collegiants of Holland, in the early part of the seventeenth century, were among the first to resort to immersion. They were called Rhynsburgers, from their custom of holding meetings twice a year at Rhynsburg on the Rhine.

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A great shock came when Doctor Whitsit, president of the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, at Louisville, Kentucky, discovered, about 1877, that the English Baptists had baptized by sprinkling until about 1641, when they changed to immersion. In their mode of baptism, they reflected the custom long prevalent on the continent of Europe rather than the mode in England, where immersion yet lingered. Roger Williams was, therefore, probably not immersed at his rebaptism. The answer to Doctor Whitsit was the charge of denominational disloyalty. Despite the fact that competent scholars, leading Baptists among them, confirmed the position taken by him, the opposition became such that he was compelled to relinquish his place in the theological seminary.

It is, therefore, evident that the position that immersion is the only authorized and valid mode of baptism is not made out. The classic use of the verb *baptizo* does not require or favor a sense so restricted. The references in the New Testament most favorable to such a view do not require such limitations. Other passages cannot, without violence, be harmonized with the unvarying rule of immersion. The earliest light from church his-

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tory, as shown in the "Teaching," shows that immersion was the prevalent mode, but that it was not regarded as the only valid mode. The investigations of historians into the mediæval period and the immediate post-Reformation period, both as respects the church in general and the various sects, gives little support to the claims made for exclusive immersion.

Immersion may be regarded as valid baptism, and may be treated with great respect, without its being exalted to the place of exclusive validity. It deserves to be stated that many persons, eminent scholars among them, who believe from exegetical or historical considerations that immersion was the primitive mode, yet in their practice and teaching favor other modes. They believe that if mode were important, it would have been set forth in such a way as to put the particular mode beyond question. They believe that the principles of things are given in the teachings of Christ, but, beyond a limited number of necessary commands, that rules, modes, and limitations are left, in the various exigencies that may arise, to the discernment of the church under the guiding of the Spirit.

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The second position before indicated is that affusion, or baptism by sprinkling or pouring, is the proper mode, and that it may be made, by ecclesiastical authority or by those who administer it, the exclusive mode. So far as theory is concerned, little is brought forward in favor of this position; but practically, in many quarters, by means of one kind and another, affusion is made to be almost the exclusive mode. Sometimes immersion is publicly spoken of as indecent. The natural timidity of the candidate may be wrought upon. No opportunity may be provided for immersion. In some churches ecclesiastical authority or administrative policy sets up a complete wall against immersion.

Much may truly be said in favor of the convenience and propriety of affusion. It is adapted to all who present themselves or may be presented for baptism. It economizes the time and lessens the danger to health on the part of the administrators of baptism. Some make use of water-proof clothing in baptizing by immersion, making thus a strong difference between them and the candidate, and raising various questions as to the rigorous theory that should require such a recourse.



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In many cases, natural supplies of water suitable for immersion cannot be found. Often the rigors of winter would lead to delays. In small congregations and in territory new to the gospel, artificial provisions could with difficulty be made. It may be remarked that in our cities and in populous parts of the country it is often difficult, even where suitable water in sufficiently quantity may be found, to secure the reverence and solemnity befitting the sacred rite. Curious crowds are called out by the announcement of a baptismal service. In many cases, even without an announcement, the places selected for the solemn services are already occupied by strollers, bathers, and fishermen. The requirement in the case, so far as a well-established church is concerned, is to provide a baptismal font or discourage all baptism by immersion. If infant baptism is to be recognized, the argument for affusion would be strengthened.

The catholicity of the gospel, its being for all men everywhere, for all ages and conditions of men, would fall in well with sprinkling or pouring as the mode. Sprinkling, likewise, impressively recalls the sprinkling of the "water of separation," which through so many years, stood as



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a type of baptism, the appointed sign of separation from sin and a life of worldliness. Yet after the largest force is given to the argument for affusion, it fails in this, that it gives support for a general but not an exclusive practice.

The third position is that liberty as to mode is to be recognized, the subject of baptism, or those speaking for him, to determine the mode. This seems on its face to be a reasonable solution. No one mode can show an exclusive warrant. The Scriptures and history do not decide. Scholars do not agree. Paul writing with reference to the observance of times and seasons, says, "Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind" (Rom. 14:5). Just as appropriately may the language be applied to the mode of baptism. Again, speaking with reference to the interference and tyranny of another man's conscience in the matter of meats offered to idols, he says, "For why is my liberty judged of another man's conscience?" (I. Cor. 10:29). The language could not have been more to the point if aimed directly against those who in our day disturb weak and uninformed consciences by trying, in the matter of baptism, to bring to their own faith and practice those who

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are already living Christian lives, according to customs under which they have been nurtured and led forth in Christian life. The right of decision by the subject of baptism does not require that the minister of the gospel should be silent or passive as to the mode of baptism. He can present his views and convictions. He can assist and sympathize with those who are seeking to reach intelligent and safe conclusions. He may even urge or dissuade; but if convictions have already been formed by candidates for baptism, or when they are finally reached, the minister of the gospel is to respect such convictions and suit his actions to the case accordingly.

## CHAPTER III.

### SUBJECTS OF BAPTISM.

THE question of the subjects of baptism may be taken for determination to the Scriptures, to the history of the Christian church, and to the practical judgment and religious consciousness of Christians. There is, of course, no difference of opinion as to believing adults being proper subjects of baptism. The exception, if it be considered such, is in the case of those who have been baptized in infancy. If infant baptism shall prove, as the subject is followed out, to have good and sufficient warrant, then the baptism conferred upon infants, as they for themselves later profess faith in Christ, becomes not other than believers' baptism, and should not be repeated. To attempt to breed dissatisfaction as to the validity of infant baptism, and to take delight in repeating baptism, unless there are the most solemn and weighty reasons therefor, is certainly most unbecoming and

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hurtful. If the applicant for rebaptism does not regard his baptism in infancy as valid, and after being instructed and assisted, remains of the same opinion, the applicant's judgment and conscience are to be regarded on the same ground that the mode of baptism is finally to be left to the decision of the applicant.

It is claimed, however, that there are adults who have not passed to the justified and regenerated state who are proper subjects of baptism. Dr. John Miley, in his "Systematic Theology," says: "The profession of a regenerate state should not be held as an invariable prerequisite of baptism. When there is satisfactory evidence of true penitence and the purpose of a Christian life in the fellowship of the church, the sacred rite may be administered as a means of grace; as a help to the faith that shall be unto salvation." In such a case, however, there is or may be true faith, though assurance of salvation has not sprung up in the soul. This being true, obedience in baptism may be a step or aid toward the conscious realization of salvation. Steps to Christ are not to be severely criticised if we may be sure that they will be followed out. Men must start from where they are.

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Counsels that do not take this into account are responsible for many persons remaining where they are. Yet the rule is that baptism is for those who have exercised saving faith in Christ.

Infant baptism is opposed by many on the ground that there is no express scriptural command for it, and that the very idea of baptism excludes it, baptism presupposing the exercise of personal faith and itself symbolizing regeneration. The silence of the Scriptures, and also of the "Teaching of the Twelve Apostles," as to infant baptism is by no means strange. Speaking on this point, Dr. Philip Schaff says: "Christianity always begins by preaching the gospel to such as can hear, understand, and believe. Baptism follows as a solemn act of introduction into fellowship with Christ and the privileges and duties of church-membership. Infant baptism has no sense, and would be worse than useless where there is no Christian family or Christian congregation to fulfill the conditions of baptism and to guarantee a Christian nurture" ("The Oldest Church Manual," p. 31).

It is by no means to be expected that the Scriptures should speak clearly and fully as to the posi-

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tion and relations of children, either in a state of nature or under grace. They reveal the state and position of adults, especially of those to whom the gospel is preached, and for the most evident reasons. Even the salvation of infants cannot be referred to under the same terms as those applicable to adults. Are they saved without their personal action? When are those dying in infancy regenerated, if, indeed, they require to be regenerated? Their exceptional position forbids the application of a vigorous rule drawn from the condition of adults, and their exclusion from recognition by baptism simply because of their inability to comply with the requirements for adults. Unqualifiedly in their infant state they rest on Christ for salvation; why may not their spiritual welfare be associated with their relation to believing parents, especially as no right of the child or principle of personal responsibility, as the state of maturity is reached, is disregarded? The idea of baptism may not, therefore, in every respect, be the same for the infant and the adult, and in speaking of baptism we should not seek at every point to make our words suit the case of infants. It is claimed, however, that the rights of the child are violated

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by his being baptized, or, so to speak, made a Christian without his consent. It is granted that infants have rights, and that to violate them would be a grave offense; but rights are not violated in such a case.

If any proselyte coming over to the Jewish religion and baptized into it has infant children, they are also circumcised and baptized. Says Wall, in his "History of Infant Baptism": "The child's inability to declare or promise for himself was not looked on as a bar against his reception into the covenant. . . . And the reason for this, which the Jewish writers give, why it was not necessary to stay to see whether the child, when come to age, would be willing to engage himself in the covenant of the true God, or not, is this; that it is out of the reach of any doubt or controversy, that this is for his good. Where there may be any question made whether a thing be beneficial or not, the concerns of a child are not to be disposed of by another." The reasoning is good, though the alleged benefit of conversion to Judaism in more recent times admits of question. But take the case of the Jewish boy, Jesus, for example. Was any wrong done him when he was

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brought up under the covenant and according to the law? In the case of Jesus, all of the requirements for the period of infancy were fulfilled at the hands of Joseph and Mary. "And when they had performed all things according to the law of the Lord, they returned into Galilee, to their own city Nazareth" (Luke 2:39). After his visit to the temple at the age of twelve, when he became a son of the law, it is beautifully said with reference to Joseph and Mary and himself, "And he went down with them, and came to Nazareth, and was subject to them" (Luke 2:51). There is no right to go against the divine order of things. While men may not ignore or override human freedom, God, in the true religion, provides for the building up of right life and character from parents to their children, in full accord with the principles of genuine freedom. To allow the child to grow up under natural impulse, chance, or fate, is to rob him of choice, character, and God-given rights. If parents are in doubt as to the claims of the Christian religion on their children, they might as well dismiss its claims upon themselves.

That baptism is an initiatory rite under the gospel, taking the place of circumcision under the old



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economy, has been the claim and belief of most Christians from the time of Christ down to the present. The bearing of this fact on the question of infant baptism is evident. There are differences as the two dispensations are different, but the points of correspondence are clear and important. Born under the covenant given, the covenant sign, a chosen people, no provision for license or wrong-doing, godly nurture, blessed and made a blessing, true freedom existing withal—all these things are common, and the most serious objections to infant baptism are thereby answered.

The considerations noticed may enable us more favorably to weigh such more direct evidences on the subject of infant baptism as may present themselves. That the Scriptures contain no direct command for the practice of infant baptism is not stranger than that they contain no direct command for the change of the Sabbath from the seventh to the first day of the week, and yet we do not doubt the reality and rightfulness of the change. As direct commands on the subject of infant baptism are not to be expected, any partial indications or proper inferences are all the more to be prized.

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Christ's mind toward children is plainly indicated in the language, "Suffer little children, and forbid them not, to come unto me: for of such is the kingdom of heaven. And he laid his hands on them, and departed thence" (Matt. 19: 14, 15). "Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven" (Matt. 18: 3). If Christ says that adults are to become as little children, why should we insist that little children are to become like adults before they shall be recognized as having a place in the kingdom?

The great commission itself is not without some indication and bearing on the subject. "Go ye therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them into the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe whatsoever I commanded you, and lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world" (Matt. 28: 19, 20, American Version). The reference to the nations, while not to be understood literally of aggregates, is not favorable to the way of thinking that would break up humanity into a multitude of fragments. The order is, making disciples, then baptizing, then instruct-

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ing. Such an order would harmonize with the idea of infant baptism. The language, "whatsoever I command you," might include instructions never reduced to writing. The "Lo, I am with you alway," may suggest that there would be fresh instructions with new exigencies, or that his followers having his presence would be able to meet whatever cases might arise. Through the Holy Spirit, he ever enlightens and directs his church.

Yet Dr. Alexander Carson, commenting on the form of the great commission given in Mark 16: 15, 16, which is left out of the Revised Version for want of authority, uses such language as the following: "I am willing to hang the whole controversy upon this passage. . . . Even if I found another command enjoining the baptism of the infants of believers, I would not move an inch from my position. . . . I would gainsay an angel from heaven who should say that this commission may extend to the baptism of any but believers." Such a vaunting attitude does not betoken a sound position or a safe leader.

The references in the Scriptures to household baptisms must be accorded a degree of relevancy

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and force. The Philippian jailer "and all his [house]" were baptized. (Acts 16:33.) Lydia "was baptized, and her household" (Acts 16:15). The most ancient Syriac version says of Lydia, "She was baptized with her children." Besides, the "household of Stephanas" (I. Cor. 1:16), that of Crispus (Acts 18:8), and that of Cornelius (Acts 10:48) are in like manner referred to. It is certainly more probable that there were children in some of the households than that there were none in any of them. It does not matter that the households in some of these cases are spoken of as exercising faith. The head of the family represented the family in accepting the gospel, and children as well as older members of the family may well have had the sign of the covenant extended to them.

It is also declared in the Scriptures that the promise is to all whom God should call and to their children. (Acts 2:39.) The statement that the children of a believing parent are holy does not mean, as some think, that they were baptized, but it does affirm the ground in the faith of the parent for such a relation as baptism declares on the part of the child. "For the unbelieving husband is

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sanctified by the wife, and the unbelieving wife is sanctified by the husband; else were your children unclean; but now are they holy" (I. Cor. 7:14).

We may now notice the light which church history throws on the question of infant baptism. Justin Martyr, writing about 140 A. D., says, "Several persons among us, sixty and seventy years old, of both sexes, who were made disciples to Christ in or from their childhood, do continue uncorrupted." The meaning is that they were baptized in infancy. Those seventy years of age at the time when Justin Martyr wrote must have been baptized as children within forty years after the ascension of Christ; that is, in the time of the apostles. Also, Justin Martyr likens baptism to circumcision, saying, "We are circumcised by baptism unto Christ's circumcision."

The testimony of Irenæus, who was born between 120 and 130 A. D., is clear and unmistakable. He was a disciple of Polycarp, who was himself a disciple of the Apostle John. He says, "He (Christ) came to save through means of himself all who through him are born again (regenerated) to God, infants, and children, and boys, and youths, and old men." In another con-

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nection he says, "Baptism is being born again to God."

Clement of Alexandria, who lived in the second century, speaking of suitable designs for seals, speaks of the representation of fishing as recalling "the apostle and the children drawn out of the water," baptism, of course, being in mind.

Tertullian, born about 145 A. D., wrote extensively on the subject of baptism. He opposed infant baptism, not, however, disputing its antiquity, which he would have done had he known it to be introduced after the apostles. He, along with others of his age, believed that baptism washes away all sin and effects regeneration in the case of the infant as well as of the adult. To be sure of its complete effects, therefore, baptism should come in after the impulsiveness and weakness of youth, even after the passions have subsided, and a constant temper has been formed, that its magical results may be completed and abiding. He wrote: "Therefore, according to every one's condition and disposition, and also their age, the delaying of baptism is more profitable, especially in the case of little children. For what need is there that the godfathers should be brought into danger,

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because they may either fail of their promises by death, or they may be mistaken by a child's proving of wicked disposition? Our Lord says, indeed, 'Do not forbid them to come to me.' Therefore, let them come when they are grown up. . . . For no less reason unmarried persons ought to be kept off." He writes further in the same manner. In consequence of such opinions, many persons delayed baptism till the time of death.

Origen, one of the most learned of the fathers, was himself baptized in infancy, about 180 A. D. He says, in one place, "Infants are baptized for the forgiveness of sins"; and in another place, "The church had from the apostles a tradition to give baptism even to infants." Origen had the best of opportunities to know the early practice of the church, since, aside from his great learning, his family had been Christians for several generations, his father being a Christian martyr. He had lived in Greece, in Cappadocia, in Arabia, in Syria and Palestine and at Rome.

The testimony of Cyprian, as given in the decision of a council of sixty-six bishops, at Carthage, 253 A. D., is given at length and with various particulars. Fidus, a country bishop, had asked



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whether baptism might be given to an infant less than eight days old, if need required. The answer, in part, was as follows: "As to the case of infants: Whereas you judge that they must not be baptized within two or three days after they are born, and that the rule of ancient circumcision [as to time] should be observed, so that none should be baptized and sanctified before the eighth day after he is born, we were all in our council of the contrary opinion." Circumcision is spoken of as a type of baptism, "the spiritual circumcision," "which type ceased when the substance came and the spiritual circumcision was given to us." It is to be noticed that neither Fidus nor any one else intimates that infant baptism was not a general and primitive custom, or that there were any reasons whatever against it.

Gregory of Nazianzen, writing in the fourth century, says: "Hast thou an infant child? Let not wickedness have the advantage of time; let him be sanctified from his infancy; let him be dedicated from his cradle to [or by] the Spirit. Thou, as a faint-hearted mother and of little faith, art afraid of giving him the seal because of the weakness of nature. Hannah, before Samuel was



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born, devoted him to God, and as soon as he was born consecrated him and brought him up from the first in a priestly garment, not fearing for human infirmities, but trusting in God." Again, he says: "What say you to those that are as yet infants and are not in capacity to be sensible either of the grace or the miss of it? Shall we baptize them, too? Yes, by all means, if any danger make it requisite." In case early death is not likely, he would favor a deferring of baptism till the child is three or four years old.

Ambrose, of the fourth century, speaks of the "laver of salvation," by which those infants that are baptized are reformed back again from wickedness to the primitive state of their nature," as the fulfillment in his times and "in the apostles' times" of the type given in the turning back of the waters of the Jordan by Elijah. Chrysostom, writing in the fourth century, says: "You see how many are the benefits of baptism. . . . For this cause we baptize infants also, although they are not defiled with sin."

Augustine, writing at the close of the fourth century in regard to infant baptism, says, "And if any one do ask for divine authority in this mat-

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ter: though that which the whole church practices and which has not been instituted by councils, but was ever in use is very reasonably believed to be no other than a thing delivered by authority of the apostles.”

So many references from the fathers seem to confound baptism and regeneration, that the following language of Augustine may be welcomed as setting the matter in a true light: “By all which, it appears that the sacrament of baptism is one thing and conversion of the heart another, but that the salvation of a person is completed by both of them. And if one of these be wanting, we are not to think that it follows that the other is wanting; since one may be without the other in an infant, and the other was without that in the thief, God Almighty making up, both in the one and the other case that which was not wilfully wanting. But when either of these is wilfully wanting, it involves the person in guilt.” He afterward expressed a stricter view with reference to children dying unbaptized.

At another place, Augustine says: “But the custom of our mother the church in baptizing infants must not be disregarded, or be accounted

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needless or believed to be other than a tradition of the apostles." The difficulties to which he seems to refer were not in the form of objections made to infant baptism by any body of professed Christians, but difficulties in making theories harmonize. At another place, he speaks of infant baptism as doubtless delivered by our Lord and his apostles. Augustine, speaking of certain ones in his own time who had come to reject the doctrine that infants are baptized for pardon of sin, says: "I do not remember that I ever heard any other thing from any Christian that received the Old and New Testament, neither from such as were of the Catholic Church, nor from such as belonged to any sect or schism. . . . I do not remember that I ever read otherwise in any writer that I could ever find treating of these matters, that followed the canonical Scriptures or did mean or pretend to do so."

Pelagius, the great opponent of Augustine on the doctrine of original sin, wrote: "Men slander me as if I denied the sacrament of baptism to infants, or did promise the kingdom of heaven to some persons without the redemption of Christ, which is a thing that I never heard, no, not even

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any wicked heretic say. . . . In a word, who can be so impious as to hinder infants from being baptized and born again in Christ?" It would have been greatly in favor of Pelagius if he could have affirmed that infant baptism was not general or was not a primitive practice, but neither he nor Augustine knew of any such want of uniformity.

In the references to church history, there has been no idea of justifying infant baptism by church authority or example, much less to justify the theological opinions of the church fathers, but only a desire to show what was actually the practice in the church at different times, and especially to show the connection of the practice with apostolic times.

If it should be allowed that there is ample ground for difference of opinion as to whether infant baptism originated in the time of the apostles and under their sanction, there is no question as to its being general at a very early time in the history of the church. Donatists, Novatians, and other sects did not hold, in this respect, different opinions or observe a different practice. The sects of the Middle Ages, for the most part, were not marked by peculiarities as to baptism save as

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some sects, or members of the same, gave little or no esteem to water baptism, especially in the case of infants. In connection with protests against a tyrannical and corrupt church, every manner of dissent and protest appeared, often connected with extravagant and heretical notions, but no clear and continuous testimony for adult baptism as an exclusive observance appears. Certainly the testimony of the Waldenses cannot be claimed on that side. With some of the Albigenses and with the followers of Henry of Lausanne, Peter de Bruis, and Arnold of Brescia, the case is somewhat different.

Anabaptism, or the demand that those who had been baptized in infancy should be rebaptized on the profession of their faith, rose in Switzerland about 1523, and thence extended to Germany, Holland, England, and other countries. The English Baptists, about 1641, substituted immersion for baptism by affusion, to which they were accustomed in the countries on the continent of Europe from which many of them had fled. Outside of the various Baptist and Disciple bodies, the churches of all lands, East and West, observe infant baptism, or at least allow it; the exceptions are small.

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The success and beneficent results of the Baptist churches may not be wholly due to the feature of adult baptism, much less to immersion as the mode, but rather to the fact of a protest faith and practice and to the energy and zeal born of opposition. Protest against the doctrine of baptismal regeneration and the corruptions and oppressions of a state church, and a literal appeal to the Scriptures, whether on real or apparent grounds, with baptismal peculiarities as a badge, have engendered most aggressive and effective qualities. But what the Baptists propaganda may accomplish when errors and abuses are more fully removed remains to be seen. Not protest or negative elements will win in the long run. The opponents or rivals of the Baptist churches will not succeed in taking the field while they do not emphasize or give a just place to the important ordinance of baptism.

The argument from Christian consciousness and practical considerations may next receive our attention. The meaning may best be understood from a reference to Neander and a citation from his church history. Neander as an historian is a favorite with those who stand opposed to affusion

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and to infant baptism. As regards both alike, he does not think that they belonged to apostolic times, but were later introduced. Yet he believes in and justifies both. Many Christian leaders take the same position and follow the same course. They are conscious of no inconsistency and of disregarding no authority. They believe that Christianity is a vital somewhat, and must have both an inward and an outward expression and development, that the supernatural must take possession of and control the natural, that positive commands must gain to themselves the support of spiritual benefits, and that principles must lead to timely shaping of rules.

Neander justified the practice of infant baptism on the ground that there is in the inmost consciousness of Christians a demand that their children should be included with them under the token of the covenant of salvation. He says: "Irenæus is the first church teacher in whom we find any allusion to infant baptism, and in his mode of expressing himself on the subject he leads us at the same time to recognize its connection with the essence of the Christian consciousness. . . . It is the idea of infant baptism, that Christ,



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through the divine life which he imparted to and revealed in human nature, sanctified that nature from the germ of its earliest development. The child born in a Christian family was, when all things were as they should be, to have this advantage above others, that he did not first come to Christianity out of heathenism, or the sinful nature-life, but from the first dawning of consciousness unfolded his powers under the imperceptible preventing influences of a sanctifying, ennobling religion; that with the earliest germination of the natural self-conscious life, another divine principle of life, transforming the nature, should be brought nigh to him, ere yet the ungodly principle could come into full activity, and the latter should at once find here its powerful counterpoise. In such a life the new birth was not to constitute a new crisis, beginning at some definable moment, but it was to begin imperceptibly, and so proceed through the whole life. Hence, baptism, the visible sign of regeneration, was to be given to the child at the very outset; the child was to be consecrated to the Redeemer from the beginning of its life. From this idea, founded on what is inmost in Christianity, becoming predominant



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in the feelings of Christians, resulted the practice of infant baptism."

It should be remembered that this language is from Neander, whose motto was, "The heart is what makes the theologian." A distinguishing characteristic of many theologians of our day is that they go even further than Neander in giving heed to Christian experience or Christian consciousness. The abuses of the tendency are many and grievous, but the principle itself is not thereby condemned. It might be affirmed that the argument that immersion grew out of a simpler form might be used to show that infant baptism was engrafted on adult baptism; but in that case, some sort of testimony should be produced. Besides, no development or outgrowth stands condemned simply because of its being such, but is to be approved or condemned according as it stands in harmony with the principles of Christianity and the proper purposes of the church, or as it opposes these.

The benefits of infant baptism, if "all things," as Neander says, "are what they should be," constitute a strong argument for the practice. The claiming of the home as the spring-head of spiritual influ-

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ence and character, the preëmpting of the children for Christ, the training of the children for Christian life and service, declare the improved possibilities of the church, provided ideals are practically carried out. These ideals require example, instruction, a community of life with the child, and a right relation to the church. It is readily admitted that if parents and the church do not assume and carry out the obligations implied in infant baptism, if instruction, Christian nurture, and constant recognition of the place and relations of baptized children, are not properly regarded, the case of the children and the church may be even worse than if children are understood to stand outside the pale of the Christian community, and then early and diligent effort is put forth to bring them within the fold. Because the ideal is often perverted or neglected is no reason why the church should set it aside. It may be said that everything that can be done along with baptism in the bringing up of the child may be faithfully and effectively done without it. If the work is really done, why may it not have the badge belonging to such reality and completeness? Probably our idea is totally inadequate, basing our

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judgment on the present partial and heedless use of infant baptism, as to what a discreet and faithful use of the sacred rite may do for the church of the future.

In former years, especially in some churches, confirmation, when the children came to about twelve years of age, was bestowed in a formal and matter-of-course way. Simply the use of water in what is usually called baptism does not itself fill out the idea of baptism, but what confirmation was designed to be is properly the culmination and completion of the act performed for the child, on the faith and position of the parents and the church; and in this final act acknowledged by the child in its own behalf. We may dispense with the word "confirmation" and also with customary forms, and use the simplest and commonest terms for the act and mode in which the child acknowledges and professes his personal acceptance of salvation and enters on the obligations of Christian life and service, but let all this, with the instruction and nurture implied, be regarded as the necessary constituent or complement of baptism. Doctor Schaff speaks of confirmation as a subjective supplement of baptism, Schleiermacher held

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that what is called infant baptism is an "incomplete rite," and requires "the public profession of confirmation as the consequent of instruction in the Christian faith." Such a view may remove some of the objections to the meaningness of "sprinkling infants," lead to larger uniformity, and guard against the many and real dangers that lie in the way. We may well keep in mind the adage, "The worst is the perversion of the best."

It is evident enough that the foregoing views will not be satisfactory to those who make baptism to be a closely-narrowed representation of a single thing, even though that thing be so great a matter as regeneration. In that case, it must be limited to adults or those who are capable of exercising faith. Such a view looks to the past and not to the future, to the individual and not to the Christian community. A correct view must combine what baptism is as a positive institution, an observance resting on a divine command, and what it is as answering to man's thought and experience and need. It should be viewed as an expression to God, as worship, and not simply as an appointment of utility to man.

## CONCLUSION.

BAPTISM, as a positive institution, was not ordained as a burden, or to discipline our obedience, or to humble our reason. It was given in infinite wisdom and love. It commends itself by the wants that it meets and the service it renders. In our individual life we are prompted and guarded by it. Family relations are hallowed and strengthened by it. It is the "water of separation," which is the sign of the putting away of evil, of dying to the world, and union with the church of Christ. It is also much more than a sign. It is a seal, a formal assumption of covenant rights and duties. It is a means of grace. It is a confession of all that is fundamental in Christianity. It is not simply a receiving ordinance, but a giving one as well, a giving of vows and of worship.

Yet our regard for it must be discriminating and duly subordinated to the things to which it is to minister. Great and sacred though it is, man was not made for baptism, but baptism for man.

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A proper regard for this fact will exclude many errors and excesses. Mode has interest and value, whether judged from the standpoint of divine ordination or of suitability to conditions and requirements of men; but mode should not divide those whom baptism was intended to bring together. Liberty and friendship should be our motto.

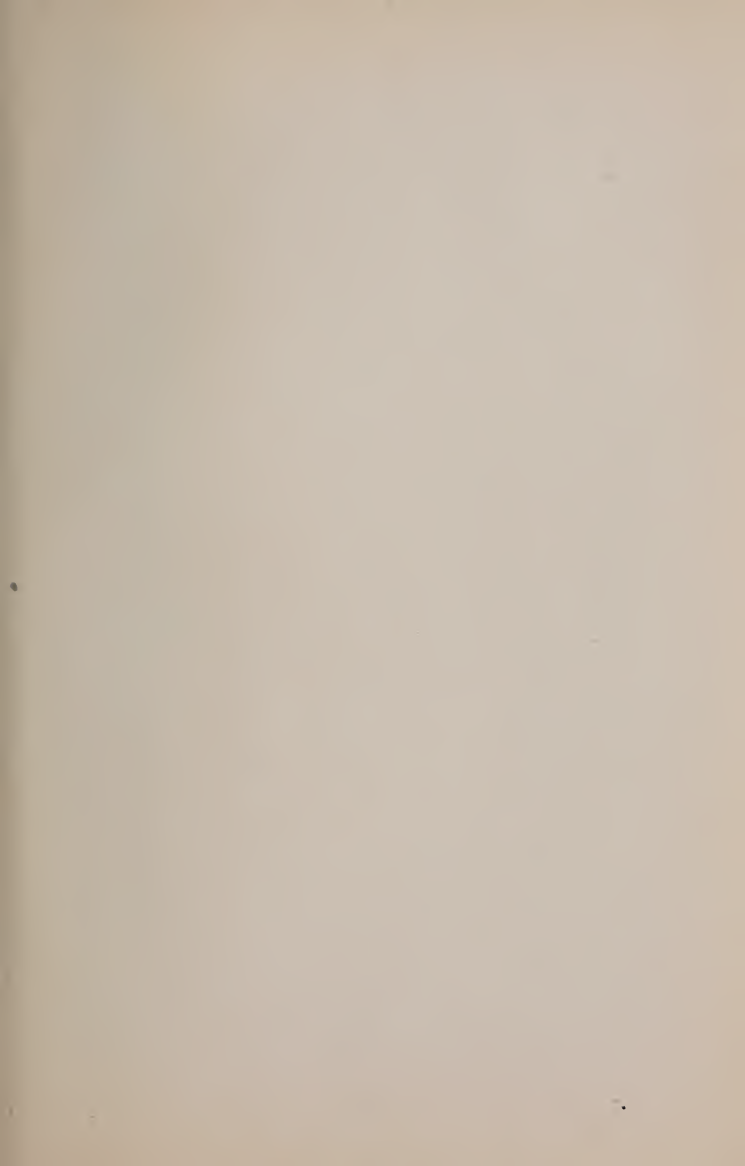
As to the subjects of baptism, perhaps more depends on the faithful and discreet way in which ideals are carried out than in the form of the ideal, though the best practice should be joined to the best ideals. Can God say of us what he said of faithful Abraham, "I know him, that he will command his children and household after him"?

Happy will it be for us if, in our attitude toward disputed customs in baptism, we, on the one hand, do not exhibit a zeal without knowledge, or on the other hand, do not become indifferent or scandalized because of the errors of others, or because of the absence of a divine command in methods of observance. Happiest of all will it be if the work of the Spirit and induction into the divine kingdom, to which outward acts and forms relate, shall truly have, in us and in our relationships, due fulfillment.















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